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ABSTRACT

Knowledge of linguistics, a systematic understanding of language and languages, is a necessary qualification for language teachers. In language learning, a "mini-language" is constructed before fluency is approached. Interaction in the language is needed, and the teacher, as the partner in the interaction, must be able to work within the narrower limits of a mini-language. Understanding of the linguistic aspects of the specific language (the student's mini-language) and of general processes of language development and operation are needed by the teacher. A good background in general and English linguistics also would be a good prerequisite for taking university-level introductory language courses. A language course must give both a common core of the language and prepare students for effective self-instruction. Vocabulary building and use of the dictionary and language study for literary studies are addressed. Ways that linguistics applies to language classroom activities are sketched, and experiences and insights from teaching a course in Hindi to students who were going to India are discussed. (SW)

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THE PLACE OF LINGUISTICS IN LANGUAGE TEACHING

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THE PLACE OF LINGUISTICS IN LANGUAGE TEACHING

H. A. Gleason, Jr.
University of Waterloo
April 1, 1978

Language teaching is full of paradox. It straddles the commonplace distinction between intellectual and skill subjects, concerned, as it is with some sort of mental skill. But it is not a highly special skill, like rapid calculation, or master-quality chess, or effective experimental design, but a very ordinary one, possessed by most people, whether educated or uneducated. It is a skill normally acquired in infancy, yet you are having some difficulty imparting it to young adults, indeed, to a select group of young adults.

These paradoxes, and more, derive from the nature of language, an immensely complex mechanism, but one that all of us operate, at some level, easily. We do so automatically, so that we are hardly aware of its complexity. When we do think about language, therefore, we are easily misled, often seriously. It is a device of great flexibility, yet one making rigid demands; of great stability, yet constantly developing and evolving.

For these reasons, more than with most skills, the mere ability to use language well does not necessarily qualify a person to teach a language. Among the needed additional qualifications we commonly list some background in linguistics, that is, in the rational, systematic understanding of language and languages. But like many other motherhood issues, this assumption is seldom taken very seriously. Almost never is there any penetrating discussion of just how this linguistics background is relevant in actual language teaching.

We are concerned today, primarily, with what goes on in the classroom, in the language lab, and at the student's study desk, the places where there come together in various combinations the teacher, the student, and the curricular materials. From these interactions, we trust, there will emerge some command of a target language.

What then, in this triangular interaction, is the teacher's rôle? In part it is to provide a model. But much of this a recording can often do just as well — occasionally, even, much better. But one thing the recording cannot do: it cannot actively interact; it is never more than a static model. But the teacher can be an interacting model, that is, a model of language interaction. By interacting, and only by interacting, the teacher can bring some semblance of reality into language use. Whatever it may be, language is not a fixed routine, mechanically run through at some proper cue. Yet there is little more than such a routine that a language-lab recording can provide.

But having said that, I have said only the very obvious, and perhaps, even, said it in a way that may be slightly misleading. It is crucial that the student and the teacher interact in language. But in what language?

Digress with me a moment to consider a hypothetical artificial form of English. Where every-day English has half-a-dozen ways to express futurity, this form has only one. Where we normally have a choice between *but, however, nevertheless,* and a number of others, this form has only *but.* Where ordinary English has an option in the order of telling events, say, *Before he had breakfast, John took a walk.* vs *John took a walk and then had breakfast.*, this form of language has only one possibility. And so on. Such a form of English can be remarkably usable. Indeed, we might easily produce rather long texts that might not strike the native speaker as in any significant way unusual. Yet in some sense it would not be fully

English, and certainly it would have some real limitations. Situations would arise where these limitations would be severely hampering.

Let us call what we have just described a mini-language — more specifically, an English-oriented mini-language. There are many such possibilities. I could easily design one far more restricted than this — perhaps one with no way whatever of expressing the future. Even this would still be usable in some situations and contexts, though it would fail utterly in some common ones.

But for any mini-language to work at all, there are certain conditions that it must meet. It would not do, say, to merely tear out pages 26 to 33 from some handy grammar and try to use that. Some indispensible patterns would most probably be missing. But more crucial, a mini-language must be more than a collection of patterns, however copious or restricted. It must be an integrated system of patterns. The individual selections must be made so that they can combine, complement, and interact with one another.

Designing an English-oriented mini-language that yields English-looking texts is an intriguing challenge, as is the comparable undertaking with French, or Chinese, or Hindi. It requires some linguistic sophistication, since a successful mini-language must reflect the way patterns, that is, elements of semantics, grammar, and what not, interact in real, full-scale human languages.

If you control a more normal form of a language, to operate successfully and fluently within a mini-language also requires some sophistication — some combination of strict discipline and insight into language and language system. I have known people, many of them language teachers, that do it well. I have known others that either cannot keep within the bounds or cannot fully exploit the available resources. Like the design, the use of a mini-language is a problem in applied linguistics.

I have digressed at length introducing the concept of the mini-language to provide one essential element from which to construct a model of the language teaching/learning process. Starting from nothing, the student is taught a small number of patterns and a small body of vocabulary. For a while these are, pretty much, just disconnected items. As quickly as we can we start helping him work these together into a small but effective system, that is, into a mini-language. Only when that begins to take shape as a system is it meaningful to think in terms of fluency. Before that, any unhesitating production is merely parroting. When an integration into system begins, the student can start to function within the language — that is, within the mini-language. What he needs now is interaction — within the mini-language. The teacher must, then, work fluently and effectively within this same mini-language. Fluency and effectiveness in the full target language is no real help.

The textbook writer or the curriculum planner has designed this first mini-language, at least in broad outline. To do so well is part of his craft. He should do it in such a way that it will allow some effective use, however constrained, and in such a way that it can be expanded into a second mini-language, and that into a third, and so on. At each stage it should be an effective, usable system, and one of abiding usefulness so that it will only need expansion, not demolition and rebuilding.

We have returned from the digression with my answer to our question, "But in what language?" First-year language students and teachers do not interact in French or in Russian, but in a French-oriented mini-language, or a Russian-oriented mini-language.

This sort of interaction is designed to stretch the student just a little. But for the teacher, his partner in the interaction, the problem is just the opposite, to work freely within narrow, artificial limits.

Here then is one special skill of the good teacher. He cannot rely on the subconscious mechanisms he usually uses as a speaker, for they would quickly draw him far beyond the limits set, very likely to the complete mystification of the students. There has to be a large component of conscious manipulation of system, and this in turn requires some explicit understanding of system in general as well as the specific details of the specific system in hand. The ability to do that is one of the things linguistics is all about — or should be.

The sequence of mini-languages through which the student will pass is pretty well determined by the textbook. Even if it has not been written with this model in mind, any good textbook does just that. At the least, it presents the selection of materials, and often it tries to mould the way they are integrated.

Yet textbooks are inevitably more successful at presenting building blocks than they are at fitting them together. If you think of the teacher as assisting the textbooks — and we should think of it this way as well as the other way around — it is in the integration that the teacher's help is most needed. With all but exceptional students it is here essential.

But how can the teacher help with the building of system unless he has a feel for language as system? So assisting the student with integrating the fragments into system demands exactly what we have mentioned is needed to operate as an interactive model — namely a feel for system, not just for system in the earliest and most rudimentary mini-languages. And here we are talking about something that is partially strange, even if oriented toward a wholly familiar target language. The teacher must perceive system taking form; he must prod or restrain, encourage or rein back, as may be needed. The sensing of system is as much part of applied linguistics as is operating, consciously, with system.

Ultimately it is the student that builds system; we cannot do it for him, only prod and assist. Students, being human, do not all build alike. One vocabulary items sticks with one, but not with another. One student gets a slightly different picture of a meaning than another. One assimilates some grammatical pattern quickly, another slowly or not at all. If there are these differences in the items there must be differences also in the more basic things. The differentiation into idolects sets in early. We cannot prevent it; but we must guide and control it. We wish to insure that each student is acquiring and operating within a mini-language that can be expanded and extended to become a workable, acceptable idolect within the target language. At any stage it is possible to start down a dead-end line of development, to entrench patterns that in the long run will be deleterious. The teacher must be constantly monitoring each of that collection of emerging idolects in his classroom.

That parallels not so much what the textbook writer does as what the field linguist does. It can be helped by some of his skills.

If your objective is to help students toward a workable, acceptable idiolect, you share this with the textbook writer. But there is a significant difference. A good textbook is written with the student in mind. But of necessity it is an ideal, average student, some sort of composite of the students the author has known, imagined, or wished for. It is therefore abstract and incorporeal. In the classroom you are face to face with real, live students, in all their variety. Part of your task, then, can be thought of as fine-tuning the textbook, as adjusting it to the individual student as he or she departs in this way or that way from the ideal or average to which the textbook is directed. There may be needed a little further explanation here, an additional example there, the explicit relating of two textbook statements for one, the rewording of a statement for another, a

shift of emphasis or an underlining. The textbook is impersonal; your classroom presentation and your office consultation personalize it.

You may be explaining or correcting or exemplfying a specific detail, but your objective is always to get it correctly understood and properly fitted in — into the student's emerging system, that is. Every detail of your work is ultimately system-oriented.

Some of this you can plan for, but not much. A question is asked, a hesitation is noted, a minor error is detected. The teacher must determine what seems to be needed and give what is feasible of it immediately. The appraisal must be made with respect both to the student and to the students language. It is by no means exclusively a language matter, but it always has a linguistic component — in both meanings of "linguistic", that is, in terms of the specific language (the student's projected mini-language) and in terms of general processes of language development and operation.

To make the best appraisal and response demands something of the same skills that the textbook writer must have; you are engaged in the same endeavour, assisting the learner to progress through an ever-widening series of minigrammars, each carefully articulated to the one before and the one after. The difference is that the textbook writer can ponder each move, and he can go back and revise. You must do it, to use modern jargon, in real time. I have many times heard it argued that the textbook writer needs, and regularly uses, basic linguistic concepts and techniques. If so, the teacher does too.

I must be careful, here, neither to claim too much nor too little for linguistics. I have heard many of my colleagues talk and act as if linguistics had all the answers for language teaching — and for several other nearby fields as well. I do not want to give any such impression. Language teaching is a respectable field in its own right, one which has or should have, its own body of carefully thought-through fundamental understandings and its own methodologies, its own practicioners and its own experimenters, its own programme of fundamental research and of development based on it. Like all such fields, however, it is not self-sufficient. It must make use, in its own way, of insights from other disciplines. One, but only one, that can and should contribute is linguistics. It is part of the responsibilities of the theoreticians of language teaching to constantly seek, in linguistics and elsewhere, whatever they can find that may be of help.

They cannot take at its face value any denial of relevance by linguists. For much of the last two decades it has been establishment doctrine that linguistics has no practical applications — and, anyway, if it did, the linguists wouldn't be interested. Or wouldn't want to be bothered. That, it has always seemed to me, is a peculiarly nonsensical, short-sighted, even egocentric position. It arises, in part, from linguistics' history as a Cinderella discipline, the scullery girl suddenly become a princess in Academe and now trying to put away that past.

But it also has deep roots in the recent aberrations in linguistic thought, particularly the identification of model with theory and theory with linguistics, leaving the discipline peculiarly unbalanced, and in the pursuit of unattainable goals by uncheckable methodologies.

But even while linguists have been giving central attention to the more abstract, abstruse aspects of pure theory, work has been going on producing significant new observations about language in general and specific languages as well. Insights of great importance have been developed. The problem for the language teacher is not so much that little has been done, as that the interesting results have been hidden behind a mass of irrelevancies and disguised in a notation and terminology that verges on the obscurantist.

What I must claim, then, is that there is in linguistics a great value. It is growing in depth, in extent, in every direction. It gives few, if any, answers, but it does have much to contribute in amassing information, in ordering the facts, in clarifying certain kinds of questions, in providing a framework for certain operations with language.

Moreover, even the most partizan of linguists are now retreating from their extreme anti-application attitudes of the recent past. You can expect improved cooperation, declining arrogance, and expanding areas of mutual interest.

My discussion so far has centred on the interaction between teacher and student around the language being taught and learned. Indeed, it has focused largely on the teacher's part in that interaction. Its burden has been that the special skills needed by a language teacher are facilitated by a background in linguistics.

When we bring the student more directly into attention we see that there is a great deal more involved. Our students do not come to their second language courses tabla rasa. Various things in their backgrounds profoundly affect, for good or ill, how they will respond to even the most skillful teaching of a second language.

The most pervasive of these is, of course, their first language — I will speak of it as being English; the problems are comparable whatever it may be. Each of them has operated, reasonably effectively, in many situations at least, in English for many years. He has done so largely unaware of what is involved. He has been reasonably comfortable in it. Indeed, English patterns have become part of his security mechanism. A change of language patterns can be distressing, particularly if he is only vaguely aware of what is happening. The distress produces resistance -- not very often conscious resistance, but the more insidious for that.

Not quite so pervasive but perhaps a bit more obvious is the popular folk-lore about language, some of it readily verbalized, some of it covertly influencing attitudes and initiative.

The typical student is fully prepared to have the vocabulary strange. He is not prepared for the meanings to be different. He is distressed it, for example, the new language does not make a distinction between 'hand' and 'arm' or between 'finger' and 'toe'. These are, to him, obviously different, and failure to recognize the difference is not only irrational but a little threatening. To have two or more, non-interchangeable words for some single concept like 'wisdom' is even worse.

Grammar, patently, is nothing but a burden, much of it. It would be so much easier, indeed better, if the target language just put the words together in the natural, obvious way like English does. Oh, of course, English does have grammar: that is some largely irrelevant set of dos and don'ts he struggled with in school. Though school teachers may have conspired against him, his comfortable English language never did like the second language does!

In the best of all worlds such feelings might be a serious problem for second language teachers in the elementary schools. But by university we should expect something else. Thirteen years of schooling should have produced some understanding of English and of language. The facts are that at relevant points it has actually produced none.

I am not joining the chorus of those who lament the sad decline of effectiveness in school English instruction. In this central part of it there has been no decline. Indeed, a few isolated instances aside, there has never been any appreciable effort to teach anything significant about English as language system in our schools. Grammar in its heyday barely scratched the surface, being deflected into a few selected trivia and a mass of artificial conventions of language etiquette. Our student's appraisal

of "grammar" quoted a moment ago is largely correct.

I have repeatedly heard language teachers decrying the grammatical illiteracy of their students. They are right that the language teacher's task would be eased if students came knowing what a subject is, or a predicate, how nouns differ from verbs, or adjectives from adverbs, or a long list of other elementary matters. But there are other, more fundamental matters that are still more serious. It would help even more if they understood something of semantic fields and the ways these can be reflected in vocabulary. Or if they had a feel for language system and text structure. Or if they understood something of the multiplicity of functions for language and the ways these interact in texts. Or if they had the same appreciation of diversity that they get, for organisms, in even the most superficial biology course.

They ought to have not only such general notions, but some specific understanding of English, of its symmetries and assymetries, of how it functions in texts (What have they been doing in literature classes?), of where it stands among the languages of the world.

It would be tremendously helpful if many of the English patterns that seem so easy to carry over into a new language were consciously understood. It is their subconscious existence that makes them so much of a problem: it puts them out of reach of most of our teaching efforts. But more generally, students need to appreciate that English is patterned in its own idiosyncratic ways, neither better nor worse, on the whole, than the ways of other languages, merely different. Only this understanding can shift their thinking about language from its Anglocentrism. A few get this more cosmopolitan point of view on their own; more need specific help in moving toward it.

What I am saying, of course, is that a good background in general and English linguistics would be an ideal prerequisite for university-level introductory language courses. That I firmly believe, having taught the same language to classes with and without such background.

Ideal it would certainly be; in our present world it is nowhere near feasible. Our schools don't and can't do it. Few universities could make more than token efforts. Students will continue to come to your courses imprisoned in their comfortable English ways, reinforcing and reinforced by all the popular prejudices about language. No one will have made any significant effort to free them. Their intellectual bondage constitutes a major obstacle and challenge to the language teacher.

Whether they like it or not, second language teachers must do some parts of this job, incidentally and over-and-above their proper work. The efficiency, in some cases even the minimal success, of their work depends on it. For language students need linguistics just as urgently as do language teachers, though, of course, in a different way, on a different scale, and with a different set of priorities.

Obviously you cannot take large chunks of time from direct language instruction to give systematic treatment of linguistic principles. In any case, that could often leave the principles detached from the language-learning problems which prompted their attention. But there may be times, many of them, when a few minutes discussion of the general principle lurking behind a specific language problem may be the most efficient possible way of handling that specific problem. All of your explanation can be informed by and informative of fundamental linguistic principles.

Incidental to the debates about language-teaching methods there has been some discussion as to whether "explanation" is desirable or not. There has been some experimentation seeking empiric answers to this and closely related questions. The results seem inconclusive. I will say little about these experiments. They seem to me totally beside the point, scarcely

relevant one way or the other. The overriding reason for my dismissal is that they have misinterpreted the objective of language teaching, as merely teaching of language, and so have measured the wrong things in their appraisals. I will return to that point later. In the meantime, my lesser criticisms: The experiments have dealt only with the simpler cases, and they have measured the effect of only the more superficial sorts of explanation.

My former colleague, William E. Welmers, once gave a short paper entitled Analyze or Flounder. This demonstrated how crucial thorough grammatical analysis can be to the learner in a language like Kpelle of West Africa. Here is a language system puzzlingly different from those of European languages in its most fundamental organization. Many of the sentences likely to be chosen for the first few lessons are, however, deceptively similar. If a student is allowed to be taken in by the seeming familiarity, he will have insurmountable difficulties at some later point. Some basic reorientation of thinking, of semantic processing, and of speech planning is called for. Teaching the details is not enough, the students must see and make their own a fundamental communicative strategy. That can only be achieved, Welmers claimed, if there is guidance from explicit and profound explanation or analysis.

The two, explanation and analysis, differ only in their source. If the teacher presents it, it is explanation; if the student works it out for himself, it is analysis. When a student is equipped to do it properly — and they can be easily so equipped — and when the proper data is made available and the work properly monitored by the teacher, analysis is commonly more effective than explanation. When these conditions are not met, particularly when the students have not been properly equipped, analysis is usually also more effective — only very likely wrong. We must either make our students good analysts or head off their analysis by prompt, even anticipatory, explanation.

Welmers' argument and my expansion on it applies particularly to "exotic" languages. Here the problem is acute and widespread. Most of you are teaching European languages, much less different from English, so the problem is less acute and less pervasive. But it is not absent: every language in Europe has some really odd-ball pattern or small system of patterns somewhere very close to the heart of the language — positioned, as it were, to present some very slippery problem to the English-speaking learner.

Let me mention just one: the English tense system. Latin has a tense-system that is, in a world-wide perspective, quite ordinary. It has a past, a present, and a future, and crosscutting this a distinction between perfective and imperfective. English has nothing like that. There is a contrast between an explicit past and pastness not indicated; a contrast between present relevance and this not indicated; a contrast between marked extension or limitation of duration (varying in interpretation according to the specific verb) and this dimension not indicated. These combine in all possible ways, from one form that specifies nothing at all, to one that specifies all three. Together with a number of other details and a few complications, this gives a remarkably flexible and expressive system, but one radically different from what is found in most languages. It defies translation and makes any form-to-form equation ridiculous.

Almost no student comes to your class with any understanding of this system, yet all of them work within it and feel comfortable with it. Any bit of it that he unconsciously carries over is likely to violate the patterns of his second language. Much of it, and he commits mayhem. A language-teaching programme which leaves him undisturbed in it is accessory to his crime. All this is compounded by the fact that he has been led to

verbalize about English in terms of a Latin-like system, and that the second language is often presented in terms of a Latin-like system as well, whether it fits or not.

He may by brute force and endless drill get some parts of the target language system functioning in his speech, but probably not all of it, and he is very unlikely ever to be at ease in it through such means alone. I can see no way to make a second-language verb system intelligible, and then ultimately comfortable, to the average university student, if we refuse to help him understand the peculiarities of their native English system.

On the grounds, then, that every language has its "exotic" complications, penetrating explanation or perceptive analysys is required at some places. But neither can be as superficial as what is often found in language textbooks. And it must always take account of the native language. Explanations that merely set forth the "facts" about some pattern often do no more than confirm a feeling that the target language is irrational, perhaps perversely complex.

Consider the students again. A few are enrolled simply to earn a credit or fulfill a requirement. The rest, we assume, share the obvious objective, to learn the language. But almost all of these have some farther goal behind that. One wants to study a literature; another wants to read chemical research reports; another wants to be a less touristy tourist; another to do field research in a non-Anglophone area; the possibilities are endless. No ordinary university language course has a homogeneous student body — far from it. The variety of goals means, inevitably, a variety of needs.

Imagine about as homogeneous a class as you can get, a group of CUSO volunteers all soon to sail for the Hindi-speaking portion of India. All need Hindi, and all know they need Hindi. With good motivation they will be an ideal class to teach. But one will be a nurse, one in construction, one a teacher, one an agriculturalist ...one will be going to the large cosmopolitan city of Delhi, another to a remote village in Rajasthan, a third to Chhatisgarh, where they proudly call their language "Hindi", but where no one from Delhi is easily understood. All these need Hindi, but they need kinds of Hindi that vary widely on several dimensions. There is no way that any classroom teacher in Canada can give them, each of them, just what they need. Indeed, it is highly unlikely that any classroom teacher in Canada can give any one of them exactly the Hindi he will need.

That is, actually, only a dramatic instance of the universal plight of all language teachers. The only students whose wants you can fill completely and exactly are those merely seeking credit.

Of course, we say to ourselves, there is some common core of Hindi, or Russian, or Chinese, that everyone needs, and we can give them that. Fine. But then what? Everyone of them needs more than that. What, specifically, is sometimes foreseeable; usually not. If we leave it to chance, many of them, will fail.

There is only one real solution: A language course must always do two things: give some portion of that common core, and prepare students for effective self-instruction. It may, of course, undertake a variety of other things in addition, depending of its own circumstances.

Unless the students' ultimate objective is fulfilled in the literature courses in your own department, it must be self-instruction. You cannot otherwise follow them as they go out and help them as the need arises. And you cannot otherwise depend on suitable instruction being available. Of course, many of our basic language courses have been designed, either deliberately or by unexamined tradition, centrally to feed the associated literature courses. This is one reason why the need has not been felt for preparation in self instruction. But that sort of course is rapidly

becoming an anachronism, an easy luxury that we cannot any longer sustain. Basic language instruction in universities must be rethought and redesigned to accommodate better the majority of students whose interests will require further instruction, generally self instruction, after they leave.

Much of my personal involvement in language teaching has been with courses at the other extreme from the traditional. I have, for example taught a half-year, non-intensive course in Hindi in which all the students expected to be in India within a year. This was set up to give them a workable minimum competence, fluency, and facility in a very restricted range of situations: greeting and related formulas of social interaction, how to get around on the bus and train and in the streets of a city, and how to deal in the market. It also gave practice in organizing their own language-learning efforts, in gathering data and analyzing structures, in observing usages, and so forth. I have been involved, directly or indirectly in courses of this kind where the students had had introductory linguistics — an applications-oriented linguistics, incidentally — and where they had not. In both situations, we seem to have been successful in making language learners out of the students.

I assisted H. S. Gill in putting together a textbook for a course of similar dimensions, A Start in Panjabi. This compromised a bit; we knew that most instructors would have less commitment than we to either the feasibility or the necessity of including language-learning techniques. But we merely deemphasized it a bit, we could not honestly eliminate it. Its last lesson gives specific assignments for the first few days in Panjab, starting with "Go to the bazaar and buy a dozen bananas strictly through Panjabi." We know they will succeed; we have given them what they need for that simple task, and the fruit merchant will certainly be as helpful as he can. That first success is a tremendous lift, encouragement, and stimulus to work at the language. We then suggest a few next steps, and they are on their own. We have, we hope, not only started them in the greenhouse, but gotten them rooted after the transplant, ready to grow vigourously.

Most university language classes work in a very different framework. There will be a much longer period of formal instruction. Few of the students realistically face an imminent period of immersion, and certainly not total immersion with their whole career on the line. Motivations are different. Teaching must be different too. But it must be a difference in degree, not in kind.

My students were going, immediately, to a Hindi-speaking long-term career, and knew it. Your students will be doing an increasing amount of their language learning outside the classroom in their other studies or in the library, but they have not really grasped that fact. You must not only give them some techinques for self study, but convince them that they will need them, even persuade them to start using them now. For utility of the techniques will not suddenly start when the students pass out from your care. Some of those techniques are indispensible aids for efficient use of classroom instruction.

Let me give one specific small suggestion, a little trick suggested to me by Martin Joos. Insist that whenever a student goes to a glossary or dictionary to look up a word, he first make a guess and write it down. The writing is merely to insure that he does really make a guess and that the guess is reasonably specific. A student who does this consistently will soon find that his guesses are increasingly frequently right. Moreover, after a while the ones in which he has highest confidence will almost always be right. Then he will realize that it is, often, no longer necessary to look up the word.

That may seem only a gimmick to learn vocabulary or to short-circuit the troublesome search of the dictionary, but consider:

Your average student has an English vocabulary in excess of 20,000 words, probably greatly in excess. To reach that minimum figure, he has had to learn and remember something like three words each day, for most of his life. This he has done, without being aware of the process in most cases. The ability do do so is an important component of native or native-like competence. And, therefore, it is one thing that a second language student must acquire in his second language — if he hopes for any approach to native-like command — and the sooner he does acquire it, the more useful and effective his learning will be.

If we do nothing about the matter, he may get it — and he may not. He is inhibited by one of those bits of folk lore he has brought with him. He has been told, most probably, that proper lesson preparation involves looking up every word he does not know. So he does, rather mechanically and unmeditatively. Our most diligent students suffer most; they go about it meticulously.

Joos' suggestion is a simple and effective means of overcoming that destructive dictionary habit, and also of positively building an important skill. But the student won't necessarily accept it easily. It cuts too sharply across their beliefs, prejudices, and acquired study habits. With mature, intelligent students it is helpful to give them not only an injunction to guess before looking, but also a rationale for it. That means some concept of redundancy and how it works in facilitating communication, and particularly, how it is used to fill out gaps in perception or knowledge, or to meet polysemy. Or, to label it another way, some rudiments of structural semantics.

In our Hindi lessons, Gill and I provided a great deal of supplementary listening materials, not to be drilled. They were taped by two speakers without pauses for imitation. They put together elements from the drilled dialogs in new combinations. Into these we occasionally inserted a word that had not been introduced otherwise, always in a context that was heavily suggestive.

I took into class one day one of these tapes and played it bit by bit, asking the students if they had understood it. All went well till we hit the plant. They all blocked. I expressed my surprise that they didn't understand it, and they complained in reply that there was a word in it /alu/, that they didn't know. I refused to tell them its meaning, and the class was stalled, it seemed like, fifteen minutes. Finally, in desperation one of them said, "Well, it's some kind of vegetable." I responded, "Of course, why didn't you say so before? If it is on sale in a vegetable stall, it has to be a vegetable, doesn't it?" But they didn't know what kind of vegetable. That, I assured them, they could ask, and I would be glad to tell them, but I could see no reason to tell them that it was a vegetable; they must be able to figure that out themselves. And then the class resumed. A few meetings later, a similar exercise produced a much briefer stall before they made the obvious guess. The third time they had learned the lesson.

I think lesson materials should be planned and written with such things built in; ours were. But I would rather steer away from a discussion of textbook writing, so that we can concentrate on the classroom situation. Suppose, then, you have a ready-made textbook without anything of the kind. It is possible to sneak an occasional unknown item into the class conversation. Pick it carefully; see to it that the context is ample and narrows down the possible range of meaning appreciably. Present it unobtrusively. Then force the students to guess. If you have planned it well, they will guess correctly. Be sure they understand just what they did in guessing, that is, how the context impinged, and then give them a five-second commercial for guessing at unknown or forgotten vocabulary.

While we are on vocabulary, one other little technique I would like to suggest: When your students use a dictionary, have them occasionally try two different dictionaries. They will almost certainly find interesting, if not puzzling differences. Give them a little help in understanding why; several reasons are possible, all pertinent. Challenge them to take a position as to which of the two best explicates the word at hand in the particular context at hand.

This does two things: It forces them to a mere critical understanding of dictionaries — the folk lore makes dictionaries automatically repositories of absolute truth — and it gives them practice in explicit use of context to determine or check a meaning.

Each of these is valuable, both immediately and increasingly as their command of the language matures and they move into real-life use of the language. Each of these is, within my meaning of the term, linguistics. Notice, if you will, if you can help make this thing stick in a Russian class, it will help just as much if that same student goes on to study German. You are dealing with general matters, not language specific.

Vocabulary is the least of the problems for the language learner, though probably the part that he fears most. Most of what I would like to suggest by way of hints on teaching grammatical patterns I cannot; because they would be largely hints on textbook writing. Students can be taught to work out a great deal of the grammar for themselves, and materials can be provided in such a way that this is completely feasible. I have done it with both Hindi and Hebrew. But when a textbook is in hand, there is limited freedom to do this. In some cases an explanation is given before the students could work it out for themselves. In others the examples are too miscellaneous to be analyzable except by a highly trained linguist.

But there may be some bits that the textbook writer has neglected to explain, and where the data is there or can easily be filled out. In these I would encourage analysis, perhaps helping the students, step by step, in their first efforts. It is hard to give specifics here — the possibilities are too tightly bound to the specific language and the particular textbook. But, I suspect, I could find possibilities in any course.

I must emphasize that I am advocating student analysis for two distinct, mutually reinforcing, reasons. First, in my experience it is usually the most effective way to get many crucial points across. Second, it builds a skill that will be needed in later language learning, where there will be no teacher at hand to provide a needed explanation. It has both short-term and long-term advantages. Either would be enough to establish it; the combination is unbeatable. At least it is so with intelligent, inquisitive students. You are teachers of university students; you should teach in due recognition of that fact.

There is one more thing that we should notice about our students' objectives. Many — not all — are studying a language so that it can be used in a context where, in fact, they will need not only facility in the language, but some explicit understanding about it. Take literary studies as an example. Obviously, to study Italian literature you must be able to read and get some meaning out of Italian texts. But the study of literature is not the mere reading of texts. There is much debate as to just what else is involved, little or none as to whether or not there is that something extra. Some of the debate is merely on details; some merely on how it should be labelled or defined. Some appreciation of how the Italian language is used to make the text what it is, is almost certainly included.

That presupposes some understanding of the resources of the language, a linguistic matter; of how these resources function communicationally and aesthetically, a partially linguistic matter; of the conventions of genre and style, perhaps largely a literary matter, but with linguistic under-

pinnings. A highly literary-oriented language course can profit by some touches of linguistic insights, not simply in teaching the language more efficiently, but in providing a broader base for the study of literature itself.

In some other academic traditions this fact is explicitly recognized. Literary students are required to undertake linguistic studies parallel with their other work, whether the literature is in the native tongue or some other. Perhaps we should do the same. But failing that, we should do what we can, incidentally, within the framework of our established curriculum — that is, both in the language and the literature courses.

When we do make a linguistics requirement we seldom exploit it very well. Some years ago I was invited to speak to a graduate students' club in an English department. They wanted me to explain to them why it was that they were required to take courses in general and English linguistics. Somehow the department had never made that clear to them, either by word or example. I hope I contributed a little toward an enlightening. If language or literature students do have linguistics courses, we should, all of us, try to make clear the tie-in.

I have tried, first of all, to do something like that here today. Many have said that language teachers should have a background in linguistics. I have concurred emphatically that they should, and have tried to sketch some ways that it applies directly in their regular classroom activities. Time permitting, I might have said more. I did not, for example, anywhere mention phonetics or phonology, though there is a great deal that I could have said about how these can help both instructor and student with problems of pronunciation, orthography, and inflection. Nor dialectology, nor historical linguistics, nor comparative linguistics; these may be less central, but they do have something to contribute — in some situations a great deal.

It is only the teacher's need for linguistics that is widely recognized. I have argued that the students need linguistics too — not, of course, the elaborate technique and abstruse theorizing that the professional linguist revels in, but rather some simply stated — which does not mean superficial — principles: how a language is put together, how it functions as a tool and as an artistic medium, and how it can be made to yield some of its secrets to a straightforward but disciplined attack. Such matters have always been, for me, the heart of linguistics. They are what I have added when I have taught languages, and they are what I would urge you to add also. Add linguistics much as a gourmet chef adds spice — not so much as to overwhelm the basic ingredients, but to accent them. I think you will find the product not only more appealing, but more satisfying, fulfilling more of our expectations for it. A dash of paprika is, you may remember, an excellent source of vitamins.

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